



For Immediate Release

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15 Years after Nisqually Earthquake, Historic Cadillac Hotel Anchors Pioneer Square Community

Restored icon of quake's damage welcomes 60,000 visitors annually to Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

Seattle – On February 28, 2001, the Nisqually earthquake damaged several significant buildings in the Pioneer Square Historic District. One of the worst hit buildings was the Cadillac Hotel. Its image appeared on the front pages of newspapers across the country to illustrate the impact of the 6.8 magnitude earthquake.

“Following the earthquake,” said Kji Kelly, Executive Director of Historic Seattle, “the future of the Cadillac Hotel was in jeopardy when preliminary analysis from structural engineers recommended demolishing the building because of safety concerns. We knew this critical part of Seattle’s architectural legacy could not be lost.”

Partnering with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Seattle quickly mobilized to prevent the Cadillac Hotel’s demolition. Historic Seattle purchased the building and assembled a team of experts who began stabilizing and rehabilitating it. The 100-year-old building also underwent seismic retrofitting and restoration of its historic finishes where possible. After its completion in 2006, the National Park Service relocated the visitor center for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park – Seattle Unit to its permanent home in the Cadillac Hotel on Second Ave South and South Jackson Street.

“Pioneer Square boasts having the only National Park Service site in Seattle,” said Leslie Smith, Executive Director of the Alliance for Pioneer Square. “This free, educational park has been a fabulous partner in our revitalization work in Pioneer Square. The park is well worth a visit for visitors and locals alike.”

“Because of a small collective of people who came together to preserve a corner of Seattle’s storied past, we’re able to welcome over 60,000 people from around the world each year and share the

incredible stories of the Klondikers that still resonate today,” said Julie Fonseca de Borges, Chief of Interpretation for the Klondike. “Partnerships can and do work.”

“Through its reuse in housing the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, the Cadillac Hotel continues to tell our collective story to the Seattle community and visitors to our city. When historic buildings are lost, our stories are also lost. This partnership is a perfect example of preservation in action, which is what we do every day,” said Mr. Kelly.

Klondike Gold Rush – Seattle is open seven days a week, 10am to 5pm, and there is no admission fee.

Background Info:

The Cadillac Hotel, one of the first structures built after Seattle’s Great Fire of 1889, was the home of low wage workers who would provide goods and services to the fortune seekers making their way to the Klondike less than a decade later during the city’s gold rush boom. Diners and other businesses catering to the public occupied the lower floors.

A turbulent post World War II economy reduced the number of visitors and transient laborers passing through Pioneer Square. The neighborhood deteriorated and the Cadillac Hotel fell into disrepair as its vacancy rate soared. To halt the blight, Seattle established the Pioneer Square Preservation District in 1970. Unfortunately, the Ozark Hotel fire that same year resulted in many hotels closing off their sleeping areas instead installing costly fire sprinkler systems. At the time of the Nisqually earthquake, the upper floors of the Cadillac Hotel had remained uninhabited for 31 years.

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More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America’s 410 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Join us in 2016 in celebrating our Centennial. Learn more at www.nps.gov and nps.gov/klse.

Historic Seattle safeguards our region’s architectural legacy by restoring and adaptively reusing historic buildings, advocating for places that matter, and sparking a passion for preservation through educational programs. Get involved at historicseattle.org.

